

# ClearMinds



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**MAGAZINE**

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## Peek Inside

● Sliding Scale & Free Consultations

● The Hidden Language of your  
Nervous System

● Validation : how to do that ?

● Breathing techniques

● When Anger Visits: A Parent's Guide to  
Calming Big Emotions

# What Have We Been Up To?

It's been a meaningful season of learning and connection here at ClearMinds, and we're excited to share some recent highlights from our growing community.

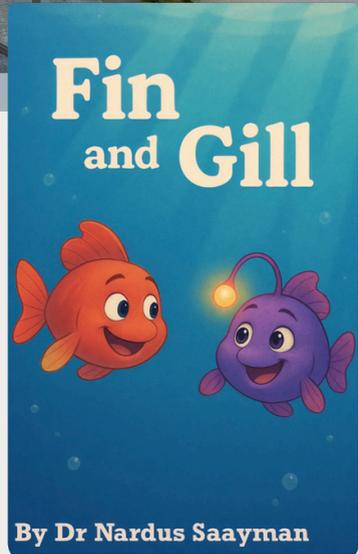
## Celebrating a New Release: FIN AND GILL

We're thrilled to announce that Dr. Nardus Saayman, our Clinical Psychologist, has just released his new children's book titled "Fin and Gill". This beautifully illustrated story gently introduces young readers to the concept of neurodiversity through the friendship of two sea creatures who see the world in very different ways.

With warmth, empathy, and a touch of humour, Fin and Gill helps children (and the adults who read with them).

better understand the richness of different ways of thinking, feeling, and being.

We're incredibly proud of Dr. Saayman for this important and timely contribution to children's mental health and emotional literacy. The book is perfect for children aged 6-12.



Fin and Gill is now available for purchase on [Amazon!](#)



## TYPE 1 DIABETES SUPPORT GROUP FOR KIDS

By Yassine Tayi MSc

Our weekly support group for children aged 6 to 11 living with Type 1 Diabetes is officially underway! Held every Tuesday from 4 to 5pm, this free group offers a welcoming and empowering space for young people to connect with peers who understand their journey. Through play, stories and shared experiences, the group is fostering resilience, confidence and community—one Tuesday at a time



## ADULTS AND UNDIAGNOSED AUTISM

By Dr. Nardus Saayman

Professional Training Session On 5 June, we hosted an insightful online event led by Dr. Nardus, exploring the subtle presentations of Autism in adults. The session was a rich blend of theory and practice, guiding professionals on how to better identify and support neurodiverse adults who may have slipped through the diagnostic net. With high engagement and thoughtful discussion, it was a valuable step forward in championing inclusive mental health care.

# The Hidden Language of Your Nervous System

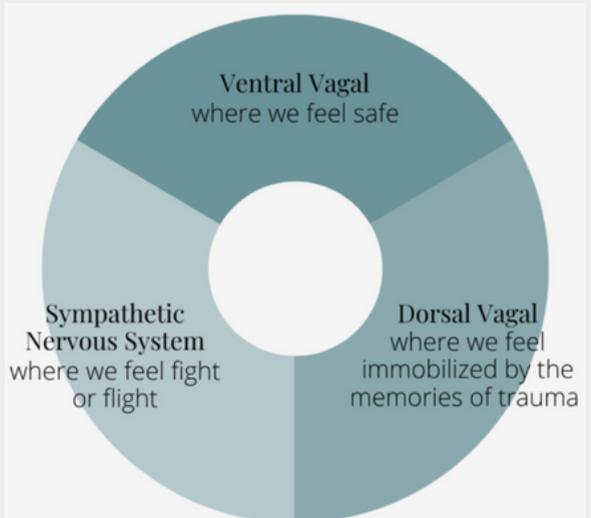
By Moni El Ramlawy, MA

## Did You Know Your Body Decides Before Your Brain?



Before you say, "I'm fine," your nervous system has already responded. That response doesn't come from logic, reasoning, or even conscious thought - it comes from your body's survival system.

Polyvagal Theory, developed by Dr. Stephen Porges, offers a powerful lens to understand how our nervous systems respond to our emotional triggers. It tells us that we're not just reacting to the world through our thoughts - we're constantly scanning for cues of safety and danger. According to this theory, our nervous system navigates three main states to manage stress. When we understand them, we begin to decode the hidden language our body speaks every day.



### 1. Safety & Connection (Ventral Vagal State)

This is your state of presence and regulation. When you're in ventral vagal, your body feels safe and calm. This is your "I'm okay, I'm connected, I can think clearly" state. In this state, you can experience joy, healing, intimacy, and connection. You can express emotions, problem-solve, and reflect.

### 2. Alert (Sympathetic State)

This is a state of threat, and when your nervous system detects threat (real or perceived), it shifts into action. This is what we call the fight-or-flight response. You might feel agitated or anxious. Your heart races, muscles tense, and everything feels urgent. This is not a weakness; it's your body trying to protect you, and while this state is essential for survival, being stuck there for too long can lead to burnout or chronic stress.

### 3. Shutdown (Dorsal Vagal State)

This state is like an emergency brake. When the threat feels overwhelming and escape seems impossible, the body goes into a state of freeze. You may feel spacey, numb, or exhausted. It can look like depression, but it's actually a survival response, when fight-or-flight no longer works.



Learning to notice these states helps you recognize your emotions. When you begin to understand how your nervous system works, you gain the power to regulate - through breath, movement, connection, and support - and you become more attuned to what you need: a pause, a boundary, a hug.

Your body isn't working against you.  
It's trying to tell you something.  
Are you listening?



# Validation

By Dalea Alawar, PsyD

The word “validation” is used often in the context of relationships and communication.



This article will discuss what validation means, what it does not mean, and how to effectively use it as a tool to communicate effectively.

**Validation**, in the context of communication, means to acknowledge what a person is feeling, thinking, or experiencing so that person can feel understood and heard. The experience of feeling understood and heard can lead to powerful effects. It helps regulate emotion, decrease defensiveness, it builds trust and safety, and it encourages cooperation. So, to validate someone is extremely beneficial to both people. But it’s not easy! Let’s talk about how to do validate effectively.

In my therapy practice, I frequently find that the most common reasons that someone does not want to validate their partner/friend/family member, are because they think that validating them would mean they agree with what the other person is doing, thinking, or feeling or because they fear that validating them would make the other person feel even worse.

However, this is not what validation is. Below is an example of what validation would look like:

**Person 1:** I’m really upset that that you forgot my birthday. It’s as if you don’t care about me.

**Person 2:** You’re right, I did forget your birthday. And I can completely understand why that would be upsetting, especially if you believe that it means I don’t care. I really am sorry that I forgot about it. It’s not because I don’t care, it’s because I have been so overwhelmed with work and family that days are passing by so quickly and I’m actually forgetting many important things. Let me try to make it up to you by taking you out to dinner.



Take note that Person 2 did not agree that forgetting Person 1's birthday means they don't care. They just acknowledged Person 1's experience.

Here is another example:

**Person 1:** I am so angry that my sister sent me this text! I don't want to speak to her again!

**Person 2:** I would be pretty angry if I got a text like that. I can understand why you wouldn't want to speak to her again, I think I would have a thought like that too. I think it might be best to wait until you are not so angry anymore to decide if you should stop talking to her, because that is a very big decision.

Take note that Person 1 did not encourage Person 2 to stay angry. Acknowledging that it makes sense for someone to feel a certain way is not the same as telling them they should continue to feel that way and that this feeling should dictate their behavior.

Overall, validation does not mean that you are telling someone they are "right". It means that you are putting the effort to put yourself in their situation and can see why they may be feeling a certain way.

Validation reflects empathy and helps build a connection with others, because we all want to feel understood and heard.



By Yassine Tayi, MSc

Have you ever tried the cardiac coherence technique?



Breathing has always played a central role in body-centred healing techniques such as meditation and yoga. It can also be found across various cultures and spiritual practices.

On a less esoteric note, science has also shown interest in the subject—and studies have highlighted various positive effects of regular breathing exercises. Several studies (Laborde et al., 2017; Tharion et al., 2011; Lehrer et al., 2003) have shown the benefits of breathing techniques. Today, I'll share with you two techniques that stands out:

### **1. The 365 Method - also known as cardiac coherence**

This technique is simple to integrate into your routine. Its main goal is to activate your parasympathetic nervous system, which calms the heart rate, lowers cortisol levels (the stress hormone), and improves your ability to process emotional information.

#### **Known benefits include:**

- Reduction in stress and anxiety levels
- Improved emotional regulation and mental clarity
- Better sleep quality
- Lowered blood pressure
- Enhanced heart rate variability (HRV), a marker of resilience
- Improved focus and cognitive performance

#### **How to practise it:**

- **3 times a day**
- **6 breaths per minute** → Inhale slowly for 5 seconds - hold for 1 - exhale slowly for 5 seconds
- **For 5 minutes**

I usually recommend doing it in the morning, midday, and evening. But the important part is adapting it to your lifestyle—you can practise it while walking to work, during a lunch break, or before sleep. What matters most is consistency .

## 2. The Wim Hof Method

You've surely heard of this popular gentleman who enjoys swimming in icy water. That alone sparked scientific curiosity, leading to the well-known *Kox et al. (2014) study* at Radboud University Medical Center in the Netherlands, which found that applying the WIMHOF method leads to :

- Reduced inflammation and improved immune response
- Better stress resilience and nervous system regulation
- Enhanced mood, focus, and cold tolerance

### How to Apply the Wim Hof Method ?

#### 1. Breathing

- 30-40 deep breaths (inhale fully, exhale passively)
- After the last exhale, hold your breath as long as is comfortable
- Inhale deeply, hold for 15 seconds, then release
- Repeat for 3-4 rounds

#### 2. Cold Exposure

- Start with cold showers, gradually increase duration
- Only progress to ice baths once you're adapted—and always with caution

#### 3. Mindset

- Stay calm and focused - consistency is key

#### • To summarize :

- ● Cardiac Coherence (365) tends to bring a quiet kind of calm — a sense of slowing down, grounding, and softening. It's not dramatic, but the effects build over time. Clients often tell me they feel more centred, less reactive, and more able to stay present in their day. It's simple, discreet, and gently restores balance — like resetting your inner rhythm.
- ❄️ Wim Hof, on the other hand, is a more intense experience. It wakes you up — physically and mentally. Many describe a rush of energy, light-headedness, and even a sense of power or control. There's something raw and physical about it, especially when you add cold exposure. It's great for those looking to challenge themselves, feel more alive, or push through mental or emotional blocks.



“Bear in mind these tips are for support, initiation. They are not cures, but they can help enhance your mood and widen your window of tolerance. Nothing, however, replaces a deep therapeutic work.”



# When Anger Visits: A Parent's Guide to Calming Big Emotions

By Hacer Subaşı, MSc

The first thing to remember is: It is totally okay to feel angry.



*Anger is a natural and necessary emotion—but for children, it can feel overwhelming and hard to express.*

*This short guide is written for you, dear parents, with simple language and playful strategies you can read with your child or to your child. The goal is to help them recognise their emotions, feel understood, and discover safe and creative ways to express what's going on inside.*

**Did you know?** Sometimes, out of nowhere, a big feeling might come and knock on the door of your heart. One of those big feelings could be **anger**. And guess what? That is okay.

If there are people around you who ignore you, move away from you, or even punish you when you are angry, maybe you can gently let them know that 'anger is a natural emotion'. It is something all of us feel sometimes.

**The first thing** to remember is: It is totally okay to feel angry. There's nothing wrong with it—it is just your heart's way of saying something important.

**The second thing** is this: When anger knocks on your heart's door, you can be kind and invite it in. That is very caring and welcoming thing to do.

Otherwise, you might feel so mad your face gets hot, your fists clench, or your tummy feels funny. But what matters is what you do with that anger. Here are some fun and helpful ways to calm down when you feel like a volcano ready to erupt!

## 1. Cookie Breathing (Inspired by Liana Lowenstein)

Imagine you're holding your favourite warm, yummy cookie. First, take a deep breath in to smell the cookie (sniff in through your nose)... now blow on it to cool it down (slowly blow out through your mouth). Try it three times. Doesn't that feel nice?

## 2. Draw It Out

Grab your crayons or markers and draw what your anger feels like. Maybe it's a red tornado or a spiky ball! Putting your feelings on paper helps them come out safely.

## 3. Chill-Out Spot

Create your own "calm-down corner" with soft pillows, toys, or a fidget toy. When you're angry, you can go there to feel safe and cool off.

## 4. Use Your Words

Try saying, "I feel angry because..." or "I don't like when..." Talking about your feelings helps grown-ups understand you better.

## 5. Try a Feelings Thermometer

Think of your feelings like a thermometer. Are you just a little warm (a bit annoyed)? Or boiling hot (super angry)? Noticing your feelings helps you stop before you explode!



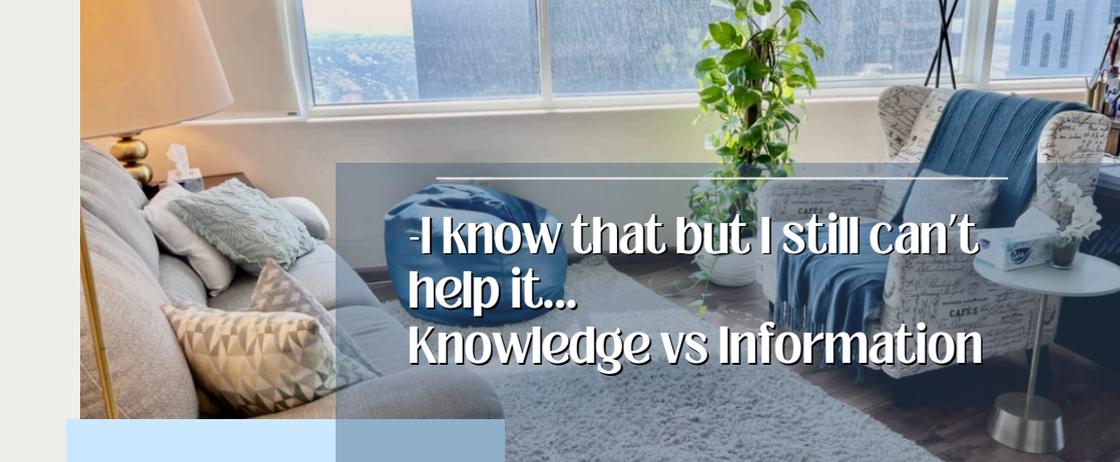
## 6. Be Like a Turtle

When you feel super mad, pull back like a turtle! Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and wait before you act. Then, come out slowly when you feel calmer.

## 7. Ask for a Hug

Sometimes, just a hug from someone who loves you can make the angry feeling melt away—like ice cream in the sun. 🍦

Whether you're looking for a bedtime conversation starter or a tool during tough moments, these gentle tips will guide you and your little one toward calmer, more connected experiences.



# -I know that but I still can't help it... Knowledge vs Information

By Yassine TAYI, MSc

“Knowledge cannot be transmitted—it must be discovered.” Jacques Lacan



## These days, information is everywhere !

A quick scroll on social media can teach you about attachment styles, trauma responses, narcissism, self-regulation, and dozens of other psychological concepts. Podcasts, books, online videos—you name it—offer endless insights on how the mind works.

Even AI tools, like ChatGPT, can offer structured explanations, clarify theories, or summarise complex ideas. And yes, it's impressive. Useful, even.

But here's the catch: having **information** is not the same as having **knowledge**. Let's use a simple metaphor. You can be told a hundred times that fire burns. That's information. But when you touch it, feel the heat, pull your hand back in pain—that's knowledge. The body remembers. Something changes in you.

**The same happens in life and therapy.** You may have read about anxiety, or seen videos about childhood wounds, but still find yourself stuck in familiar patterns. Why? Because the information hasn't yet become knowledge. And knowledge only forms when something is felt, processed, and integrated—when it moves from the head into the body, into relationships, into the choices you make.

### Therapy isn't about giving you more facts.

It's about helping you discover your truth, at your rhythm, in your words.

**Knowledge** has more to do with what you don't yet know than what you think you know.

It's what rises when you begin to connect with the information you have— and that requires space, transference (the therapeutic relationship), resilience and a willingness to see, hear and sense the parts what we often avoid.

### A quick clinical example :

#### Information may sound like:

*“I get super angry whenever my partner leaves for work – I have attachment issues.”*

#### where knowledge sound like:

*“I'm mad because when she leaves, I fear being cheated on. And that would mean I can't satisfy my partner... I'm not enough.”*



# “Which Term Am I?” – Psychology Brain Teaser

Can you guess the psychology term from the description? Circle your answers and check the key on the next page!

**1. I'm what Freud called the “moral compass” of the mind.**

- A. Ego
- B. Superego
- C. Unconscious

**2. I'm the phenomenon where people perform better when others are watching.**

- A. Social Facilitation
- B. Groupthink
- C. Spotlight Effect

**3. I'm the tendency to seek out information that confirms what you already believe.**

- A. Fixed Mindset
- B. Self-Serving Bias
- C. Confirmation Bias

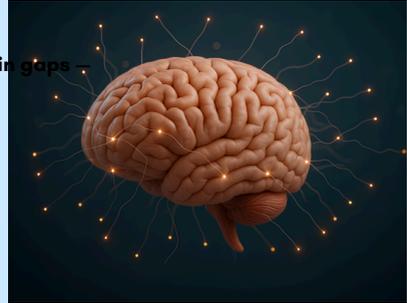


**4. I'm a famous experiment where a dog starts to drool at the sound of a bell.**

- A. False Memory
- B. Implicit Memory
- C. Selective Attention

**5. I'm the fuzzy part of your memory that fills in gaps – even when it's wrong.**

- A. False Memory
- B. Implicit Memory
- C. Selective Attention



*Check how many you got right! (No pressure — even Freud wouldn't have scored 100%.)*

**1. Superego :**

Freud's "moral compass" — it keeps your wild instincts in check.

**2. Social Facilitation :**

You run faster or perform better when someone's watching? Yep, that's me.

**3. Confirmation Bias :**

The reason why your favourite social media feed always agrees with you.

**4. Classical Conditioning :**

Pavlov's bell: proof that even dogs know how to connect the dots.

**5. False Memory :**

Your brain, confidently misremembering events since forever.

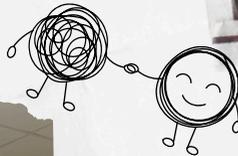
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